THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) Recognising the symbiotic relationship between forests and the tribals, the National Forest Policy of 1988 has laid adequate emphasis on the protection of tribal interests through a number of policy directives which include safeguarding of customary rights, concessions enjoyed by the people; association of tribal people in the protection, regeneration and development of forests as well as to provide them with gainful employment; replacement of forest contractors by institutions such as tribal co-operatives, labour co-operatives, government corporations etc; protection, regeneration and optimum collection of Minor Forest Produce; *family oriented schemes for improving the* status of the tribal beneficiaries; undertaking integrated area development programmes etc. In pursuance of these policy directives both the Central Government and State Governments have initiated activities and programmes aimed at achieving the above mentioned policy objectives.

(b) In pursuance of the policy directive regarding replacement of contractors by institutions some States have taken steps to execute forestry works like collection, processing and marketing of Minor Forest Produce, logging etc. through Tribal Co-operative Societies/Tribal Development Corporations.

(c) Do not arise.

Consumption of Wood in the Country

3868. SHRI KRISHAN LAL SHARMA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a major source of consumption of wood in the country is traditional, religious and sentimental rituals;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the source of wood in the country is gradually diminishing; and

(c) if so, what steps Government propose to take to create mass awareness among the masses of the country activities and to promote use of latest techniques in the traditional and sentimental ritual?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Biotic pressure and requirement of wood is increasing.

(c) Various steps taken to create mass awareness for reduction of use of wood are:—

(i) Use of media and extension services to create awareness about benefits of forests conservation, use of improved smokeless Chullas, Solar Cookers, improved Crematoria and other non-conventional sources of energy.

(ii) Involvement of local people in preparation of micro-plan for afforestation and promotion of wood conservation and wood substitution measures.

(iii) Forest personnels and beneficiaries of Social Forestry Programme are being imparted training for raising of nurseries, plantations and forest protection under various schemes.

Rajasthan Me Khanan Mafia Ke Loot-Khasot

3869 SHRI RAMENDRA KUMAR YADAV "RAVI": Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the attention of the government has been drawn to the news items published in Hindi Blitz dated 12th June, 1993 under the caption Rajasthan Me Khanan Mafia Ke Loot-Khasot;

(b) if so, the details thereof, and

(c) what is the reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) to (c) The news item mentioned in the question deals with the alleged support of a former Chief Minister of Rajasthan to mine owners who exploit the minerals causing environmental damage. According to the news item the former Chief Minister is alleged to have said that the notification issued by Government of India is an international conspiracy against exploitation of minerals, the notification would result in unemployment, loss of revenue etc.

It also attributes to one environmental scientist opinion that figures quoted by some promining sources in respect of large scale employment given to labourers as a result of liberally granted mining leases are highly exaggerated and that leases in the Aravalli Ranges are a great danger to the forest cover,

rich-biodiversity and natural environment of the area. The scientist is also reported to have expressed concern about the depleted forest cover in Rajasthan generally.

The Government of India issued a notification on 7th May, 1992 regulating developmental activities in the Aravalli Ranges of Alwar District of Rajasthan and Gurgaon District of Haryana. This notification does not ban any activity. The notification was issued as per Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 and Rules made thereunder, after hearing representations from the State Governments concerned, Industry and Mining associations, NGOs etc.

Besides the Ministry has also taken up an afforestation programme in the Aravallis with Japanese assistance.

It is Government's endeavour to hear all parties who have relevant views to express on such matters, and suitable ameliorative action is taken whenever necessary.

Deforestation and Destruction of Forest in Bihar

3870. SHRI SHIV PRATAP MISHRA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that deforestation and destruction of forests is still continuing in Bihar; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and what remedial, measures are taken by Government in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) No Report has been received regarding large scale deforestation and destruction of forest areas in Bihar. State of Forest Report published by Forest Survey of India shows no change in actual forest cover for 1989 and 1991 assessments in Bihar.

(b) The steps taken by Government to check illegal felling of trees are given as under:—

(i) The National Forest Policy, 1988, lays more emphasis on conservation of forest. There are specific provisions for protection of forests from grazing, fires and encroachment.

(ii) Forest (Conservation) Act was enacted in 1980 to check diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes. The Act has been made more stringent by an amendment in 1988.

(iii) A centrally sponsored scheme is under implementation to help the States to develop infrastructure for protection of forests.

(iv) Import Policy for timber has been liberalised.

(v) Export of timber has been banned.

Denudation of Chhotanagpur Hills in Bihar

3871. SHRI RAM DEO BHANDARI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the hills of Chhotanagpur, Santhal Parganas and Palamu Divisions of Bihar have been mercilessly denuded;

(b) whether it is a fact that this has caused ecological and environmental imbalances; and

(c) if so, what corrective measures Government are taking and the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) No report of merciless denudation of the hills of Chhotanagpur, Santhal Parganas and Palamu Division of Bihar has come to the notice of the Government.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) The various steps taken by the Government to ensure preservation and sustainable exploitation of forest in order to maintain environmental balance are:—

(i) National Forest Policy 1988 lays more emphasis on conservation of forests. There are specific provisions for protection of forests from grazing, fires and encroachment.

(ii) Forest (Conservation), Act was enacted in 1980 to check diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes. The Act has been made more stringent by an amendment in 1988.

(iii) Efforts have been made to give a renewed thrust upon afforestation works from Seventh Plan period.

(iv) States/Union Territories have been